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 August 1, 2010

## I. Good Seed, Bad Seed

- A. The 13<sup>th</sup> chapter of Matthew is considered a bit of a turning point in the ministry of Jesus.
- B. In the earlier part of His ministry, Jesus had taught in the Synagogue.
- C. Rising tension between Him and the Pharisees forced Him to move outdoors by the shores of the Sea of Galilee.
- D. There seems to be a tension between religious people and people of simple faith.
- E. John Wesley, the architect of the movement that would become the Methodist Church, was an unwelcomed guest in the Anglican church of which he was a priest.
- F. His desire to take the Gospel message to people in the coal mines, to the slums of the towns of Great Britain, was looked down on by the elite, religious church people of the 18<sup>th</sup> century in which his ministry took place.
- G. I doubt it was by accident that Jesus seized the opportunity of moving outside in order to communicate to his audience through the use of parables that talked about growth and life as it occurred in the world of nature.
- H. Last week we looked at the parable of the sower; throwing seed which landed on four different types of soil.
- I. Moving outdoors was the perfect venue to share what the Kingdom of God was like.
- J. So standing outside, possibly even watching a man sow seeds, or overlooking a field of wheat, Jesus tells another parable.
- K. *(Mat 13:24-43 NRSV) He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven may be compared to someone who sowed good seed in his field; {25} but while everybody was asleep, an enemy came and sowed weeds among the wheat, and then went away. {26} So when the plants came up and bore grain, then the weeds appeared as well. {27} And the slaves of the householder came and said to him, 'Master, did you not sow good seed in your field? Where, then, did these weeds come from?' {28} He answered, 'An enemy has done this.' The slaves said to him, 'Then do you want us to go and gather them?' {29} But he replied, 'No; for in gathering the weeds you would uproot the wheat along with them. {30} Let both of them grow together until the harvest; and at harvest time I will tell the reapers, Collect the weeds first and bind them in bundles to be burned, but gather the wheat into my barn.'"*
- L. It may sound sort of made up, but this practice of sabotage exists even in some underdeveloped countries today.
- M. William Barclay writes, "To this day in India one of the direst threats which a man can make to his enemy is "I will sow bad seed in your field." The Romans even had a law that would have existed at the time of Jesus that made this a crime.
- N. Those listening to Jesus may have actually been a victim of such a crime.
- O. The words translated "weeds" or as "tares" in the Elizabethan language of the King James Version is thought to be a type of ryegrass, *Beaded darnel*, which looks much like wheat in its early stages of growth.
1. It's scientific name is *Lolium temulentum*
  2. More affectionate terms are *False Wheat* or *Bastard Wheat*
  3. According to Wikipedia: It bears a close resemblance to wheat until the ear appears. The ears on the real wheat are so heavy that it makes the entire plant droop downward, but darnel, whose ears are light, stands up straight. The wheat will also appear brown when ripe, whereas the darnel is black.
- P. Once it becomes distinguishable, the roots of the wheat and the weeds are often intertwined; and if you were to pull the weeds, you would also pull or damage the roots of the wheat.

Q.For those of you who garden, enjoy landscaping or have farmed, you know some of the wisdom sayings of weeding.

1. The best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant. If it is difficult to uproot, it is a weed.
2. There is another test. To distinguish flowers and landscaping from weeds, simply pull up everything. What grows back is weeds.

R.Most of us have noticed that last winter's cold killed some of our valuable plants and sod, but the weeds didn't die. They came back and in some places with a vengeance.

S.Thanks to those who helped with our landscape project and those who have adopted a plot.

T.So it was a common practice that it was at the time of harvest that the wheat and the weeds were separated.

## II. What about the Weeds?

A.Jesus continues teaching: *{31} He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; {32} it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." {33} He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened." {34} Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables; without a parable he told them nothing. {35} This was to fulfill what had been spoken through the prophet: "I will open my mouth to speak in parables; I will proclaim what has been hidden from the foundation of the world."*

B.Remember that the purpose of parables was to make the audience think.

C.That is what I love about the Gospel. Jesus doesn't just present us with a bunch of laws, but instead lays before us a path by which we can live our lives.

D.He allows us to think about what He says. He doesn't force it on us, doesn't threaten us, just gives us a choice.

E.He tells these two other parables as sort of a buffer. Next week I will teach on those and share the connection.

F.For now, just consider this a pregnant pause.

## III. Working with Weeds

A.*{36} Then he left the crowds and went into the house. And his disciples approached him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the weeds of the field." {37} He answered, "The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man; {38} the field is the world, and the good seed are the children of the kingdom; the weeds are the children of the evil one, {39} and the enemy who sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels. {40} Just as the weeds are collected and burned up with fire, so will it be at the end of the age. {41} The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will collect out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all evildoers, {42} and they will throw them into the furnace of fire, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. {43} Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Let anyone with ears listen!"*

B.It is important to note, that the Biblical understanding of the world states that we live in a Fallen World. A world where our choices have led to corruption.

C.*(Gen 3:17-18 NRSV) And to the man he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree about which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; {18} thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you; and you shall eat the plants of the field.*

D.It is important to note that from the beginning of time weeds were seen as a result of humanity giving into the temptation of the Evil One, and humanity's inability to handle the natural consequence of our rebellion, we are wheat living among weeds.

- E. We know from last week that Jesus uses weeds as a metaphor to describe the cares of the world and things that compete for our attention.
- F. This parable reminds us that there is a hostile power at work in the cosmos whose intention is to subvert the work of the Gospel. Jesus states this is the work of the Evil One, Satan.
- G. The parable of the sower illustrates how the weeds are the cares of the world, the everyday trials that work to rob our faith.
- H. Jesus now describes another use of weeds, the evil that is constantly at work in the world through methods that are more of a cultural and universal nature, communal rather than individual.
- I. Jesus' message is let the wheat and weeds grow together, and God will take care of it on judgment day.
- J. This parable is a distinct warning that as believers we are called to live among nonbelievers and let God judge righteously.
- K. Historically, the church has failed to heed the advice of Jesus by attempting to either dominate human society or (when that is not possible) isolating themselves from culture and society. Neither is the way that Jesus prescribes.
- L. As early as the 4<sup>th</sup> century, St. Augustine noted that the church was already becoming overrun by weeds and hypocrisy was in its leaders: O you Christians, whose lives are good, you sigh and groan as being few among many, few among very many. The winter will pass away, the summer will come; lo! The harvest will soon be here. The angels will come who can make the separation, and who cannot make mistakes. ... I tell you of a truth, my Beloved, even in these high seats there is both wheat, and tares, and among the laity there is wheat, and tares. Let the good tolerate the bad; let the bad change themselves, and imitate the good. Let us all, if it may be so, attain to God; let us all through His mercy escape the evil of this world. Let us seek after good days, for we are now in evil days; but in the evil days let us not blaspheme, that so we may be able to arrive at the good days. Augustine, Sermon #23 on the New Testament.
- M. During the Middle Ages, the church exercised corrupt influence of the government leading to the Inquisition, which resulted in the execution of thousands of Jews and other non-Christians. This mentality led to the Crusades, which resulted in the deaths of the Muslim "infidels."
- N. The Reformation may have recovered the biblical message of salvation by grace, but it rekindled the domination strategy for the church. John Calvin authorized the execution of Michael Servetus because he denied the Trinity. The Reformers also drowned thousands of Anabaptists, partly because they rejected infant baptism.
- O. Oliver Cromwell led his troops in worship services of thanksgiving to God for enabling them to kill whole villages of Irish Catholics.
- P. Fourteen women and five men were hanged during the Salem Witch Trials between February, 1692 and May, 1693. One man who refused to enter a plea was crushed to death under heavy stones in an attempt to force his confession.
- Q. The atrocities of Nazi Germany and the acceptance of the persecution and murder of Jews in Europe was an attempt to weed out that which was deemed impure in Europe.
- R. In my lifetime, I have watched the effects of Secular Humanism work to diminish the influence of Christianity in American culture. Eliminating prayer and Bible reading as a part of public school practice, controversy over posting the 10 Commandments in public places, the acceptance of abortion and the movement towards same sex marriages.
- S. Of recent, we have watched our country come under the attack of terrorists that are influenced by radical sects of Islam.
- T. How will we respond to a world that seems to be increasingly anti-Christian.

#### IV. **Wait to Weed Wack!**

A. During the Crusades, one of the most awful times in the history of the church, Christians went to war in the name of Christ. In one of the first crusades, Christian knights from Western Europe raided an Arab town on their way to the Holy Land and killed everyone with brown skin and turbans. Later, when they turned the bodies over; they found crosses around most of their victim's necks. It never occurred to them that Christians could have brown skin as well as white, or that Christians might wear turbans.

B. Martin Luther: Now this Gospel teaches us how the kingdom of God or Christianity fares in the world, especially on account of its teaching, namely, that we are not to think that only true Christians and the pure doctrine of God are to dwell upon the earth...

Again this Gospel teaches how we should conduct ourselves toward these heretics and false teachers. We are not to uproot nor destroy them. Here he says publicly let both grow together. We have to do here with God's Word alone; for in this matter he who errs today may find the truth tomorrow. Who knows when the Word of God may touch his heart? But if he be burned at the stake, or otherwise destroyed, it is thereby assured that he can never find the truth; and thus the Word of God is snatched from him, and he must be lost, who otherwise might have been saved. Hence the Lord says here, that the wheat also will be uprooted if we weed out the tares. That is something awful in the eyes of God and never to be justified. THE SERMONS OF MARTIN LUTHER, VOL. II, PAGE 102

#### V. A Parable for an Imperfect Church!

A. I am going to paraphrase the words of Mike Magee Brentwood, First Presbyterian Church, describing what some view as the perfect church. A congregation of people who renew their spiritual vows each year. Their vows to tithe, to attend Bible study every week, to pray every day, to be politically active for the poor every week. A congregation of committed people. That would be the perfect church community. Some have even left CrossRoad because we are not that kind of a community. The vision of CrossRoad Church is a community that is wide open to all people, including the uncommitted, the half committed, the lukewarm, the confused, the puzzled, the materialists, the messed up, the addicted, the afflicted. A community where all are welcome. We aren't afraid to let both weeds and wheat in our church because none of us are sure which is which and who is who. We never know when God is going to be through with us, and God can certainly use weeds.

#### VI. Jesus' Job: Weeds to Wheat!

A. This parable doesn't tell the whole story. In the plant world, wheat is always wheat and weeds are always weeds. People, however, are not plants. At the heart of the message of Jesus is transformation. We were all weed who were transformed into wheat. We can never be sure when God is through with us or other people, so we should not be too hasty in judging!

#### VII. The Mission of the Church: \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ !

A. Forgive me if this is too understated, I think Jesus is telling His followers it is not our mission to be weed pullers. We don't have the discernment, we don't have the permission, but most of us like to try.

B. When we do, there is the potential for all kinds of damage.

C. Jesus tells us our job is to focus on Sowing and Growing.

D. At harvest time, God will sort out the wheat and the weeds.

E. When we do our job, it increases the harvest!

#### VIII. Prayer